

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.









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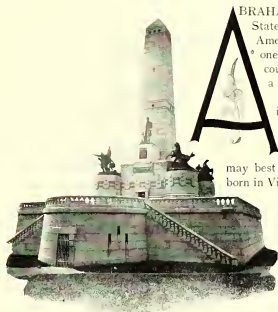




*A. Lincoln*

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN, the sixteenth President of the United States, stands out conspicuously in the category of illustrious American heroes and statesmen, next to Washington. The one earned the distinguished appellation of "Father of his country," the other that of its "Savior" from the perils of a fratricidal war.

On the 12th of February, 1809, in Larue (then Hardin) county, Kentucky, in a cabin on Nolan creek, three miles west of Hodgenville, Abraham Lincoln was born. His parents were Thomas and Nancy (Hanks) Lincoln.

Of his ancestry in early years, the little that is known may best be given in his own language: "My parents were both born in Virginia, of undistinguished families—second families perhaps, I should say. My mother, who died in my tenth year, was of a family by the name of Hanks, some of whom now remain in Adams, and others in Macon, county, Illinois. My paternal grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, emigrated from Rockbridge county, Virginia, to Kentucky, in 1781 or 1782, where, a year or two later, he was killed by Indians—not in battle, but by stealth when he was laboring to open a farm in the forest. My ancestors, who were Quakers, went to Virginia from Berks county, Pennsylvania. An effort to identify them

with the New England family of the same name ended in nothing more definite than a similarity in christian names in both families, such as Enoch, Levi, Mordecai, Solomon, Abraham and the like. My father at the death of his father was but six years of age, and he grew up literally without education. He removed from Kentucky to what is now Spencer county, Indiana, in my eighth year. We reached our new home about the time the State came into the Union. It was a wild region, with bears and other wild animals still in the woods. There I grew to manhood.

"There were some schools, so called, but no qualification was ever required of the teacher beyond 'readin', writin', and cipherin' to the rule of three.' If a straggler supposed to understand Latin happened to sojourn in the neighborhood, he was looked upon as a wizard. There was nothing to excite ambition for education. Of course when I came of age I did not know much. Still, somehow, I could read, write, and cipher to the rule of three, and that was all. I have not been to school since. The little advance I now have upon this store of education I have picked up from time to time, under the pressure of necessity. I was raised to farm work, which I continued until I was twenty-two. At twenty-one I came to Illinois, and passed the first year in Macon county. Then I got to New Salem, at that time in Sangamon, now in Menard, county, where I remained a year as a sort of clerk in a store.

"Then came the Black Hawk war, and I was elected a captain of volunteers—a success which gave me more pleasure than any I have had since. I went into the campaign; was elated; ran for the Legislature the same year (1832) and was beaten,—the only time I have ever been beaten

by the people. The next and three succeeding biennial elections I was elected to the Legislature, and was never a candidate afterward.

"During this legislative period I had studied law, and removed to Springfield to practice it. In 1846 I was elected to the Lower House of Congress; was not a candidate for re-election. From 1849 until 1854, inclusive, I practiced the law more assiduously than ever before. Always a Whig in politics, and generally on the Whig electoral tickets, making active canvasses, I was losing interest in politics when the repeal of the Missouri Compromise roused me again. What I have done since is pretty well known."

The early residence of Lincoln in Indiana was sixteen miles north of the Ohio river, on Little Pigeon creek, one and a half miles east of Gentryville, within the present township of Carter. Here his mother died, October 5, 1818, and the next year his father married Mrs. Sallie (Bush) Johnston, of Elizabethtown, Kentucky. She was an affectionate foster-parent, to whom Abraham was indebted for his first encouragement to study. He became an eager reader, and the few books owned in the vicinity were many times perused. He worked frequently for the neighbors as a farm laborer; was for some time clerk in a store at Gentryville; and became famous throughout that region for his athletic powers, his fondness for argument, his inexhaustible fund of humorous anecdote, as well as for mock oratory, and the composition of rude satirical verses. In 1828 he made a trading voyage to New Orleans as "bow hand" on a flatboat; removed to Illinois in 1830; helped his father build a log house and clear a farm on the north fork of Sangamon river, ten miles west of Decatur, and was for some time employed in splitting rails for the fences—a fact which was prominently brought forward for a political purpose thirty years later.

In the spring of 1831, he, with two of his relatives, was hired to build a flatboat on the Sangamon river and navigate it to New Orleans. The boat stuck on a milldam and was gotten off with great labor through an ingenious mechanical device, which some years later led to Lincoln's taking out a patent for "an improved method of lifting vessels over shoals." This voyage was memorable for another reason,—the sight of slaves chained, maltreated, and flogged at New Orleans, which was doubtless the origin of his deep convictions upon the slavery question.

Returning from his voyage, he became a resident for several years of New Salem, a recently settled village on the Sangamon, where he was successively a clerk, grocer, surveyor and postmaster, and acted as pilot to the first steamboat that ascended the Sangamon. Here he studied law, interested himself in local politics after his return from the Black Hawk war, and became known as an effective "stump speaker." The subject of his first political speech was the improvement of the channel of the Sangamon, and the chief ground on which he announced himself (1832) a candidate for the Legislature was his advocacy of this popular measure, on which subject his practical experience made him the highest authority.

Elected to the Legislature in 1834 as a "Henry Clay Whig," he rapidly acquired that command of language and that homely but forcible rhetoric which, added to his intimate knowledge of the people from whom he sprang, made him more than a match in debate for his well educated opponents. He was re-elected to the General Assembly in 1836, 1838, and 1840, serving four consecutive terms. Admitted to the bar in 1837, he soon established himself at Springfield, where the State capital was located in 1839, largely through his influence; became a successful pleader in the State, circuit, and district courts; married, in 1842, Mary Todd, a lady belonging to a prominent family of Lexington, Kentucky; took an active part in the presidential campaigns of 1840 and 1844, as candidate for elector on the Harrison and Clay tickets, and in 1846 was elected to the United States House of Representatives, over the celebrated Peter Cartwright. During his single term in Congress he frequently appeared in the debates, and for a new member made a favorable impression as a rising statesman. He voted for the reception of anti-slavery petitions, for the abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia, and for the Wilmot Proviso; but was chiefly remembered for the stand he took against the Mexican war. For several years thereafter he took comparatively little interest in politics, but gained a leading position at the Springfield bar. Two or three non-political lectures and a eulogy on Henry Clay (1852) added nothing to his notoriety as a politician.

In 1854 the repeal of the Missouri Compromise by the Kansas-Nebraska act aroused Lincoln from his indifference, and in attacking that measure he had the immense advantage of knowing perfectly well the motives and record of its author, Stephen A. Douglas, of Illinois, then popularly designated as the "Little Giant." The latter came to Springfield in October, 1854, on the occasion of the State Fair, to vindicate his policy in the Senate, and the "Anti-Nebraska" Whigs, remembering that Lincoln had often measured his strength with Douglas in the Illinois Legislature and before the Springfield courts, engaged him to make a reply. This speech, in the opinion of those who heard

it, was one of the greatest efforts of Lincoln's life,—certainly one of the most effective in his whole career. It took the audience by storm and from that moment it was felt that Douglas had met his match. Joint discussions were held by the distinguished disputants at Peoria and other points, the effect of which, with the fierce campaign against the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, resulted in the election of an anti-Nebraska legislature, and Lincoln was selected as the anti-Nebraska candidate for the United States Senate, to succeed General James Shields, whose term expired March 4, 1855, and led to several ballots; but Lyman Trumbull was ultimately chosen. The second conflict on the soil of Kansas, which Lincoln had predicted, soon began. The result was the disruption of the Whig and the formation of the Republican party. At the Bloomington State Convention in 1856, where the new party first assumed form in Illinois, Lincoln made the greatest speech of his life, in which for the first time he took distinctive grounds against slavery in itself. Thenceforth he became the leader of his party in the State.

At the national Republican Convention in Philadelphia, June 17, after the nomination of Fremont, Lincoln was put forward by the Illinois delegation for the vice-presidency, and received on the first ballot one hundred ten votes, against two hundred fifty-nine for William L. Dayton. He took a prominent part in the canvass of that year in this and other States. In 1859 Lincoln was unanimously nominated by the Republican State Convention as its candidate for the United States Senate in place of Douglas, and in his speech of acceptance used the celebrated illustration of a "house divided against itself" on the slavery question, which, while in the resulting argument it was made to conduce to his final defeat, was so handled as to make impossible the nomination of his opponent as the Democratic candidate for President, which was his objective point. The seven great debates carried on at the principal towns of Illinois between Lincoln and Douglas, as rival senatorial candidates, resulted, at the time, in the election of the latter; but being widely circulated as a campaign document it fixed the attention of the country upon the former as the clearest and most convincing exponent of Republican doctrine.

Early in 1859 he began to be named in Illinois as a suitable Republican candidate for the presidential campaign of the ensuing year, and a political address delivered at the Cooper Institute, New York, February 27, 1860, followed by similar speeches at New Haven, Hartford, and elsewhere in New England, first made him known to the Eastern States in the light in which he had long been regarded at home. By the Republican State Convention, which met at Decatur, Illinois, on the 9th and 10th of May, Lincoln was unanimously endorsed for the presidency. It was on this occasion that two rails, said to have been split by his hands thirty years before, were brought into the convention, and the incident contributed much to his popularity. The National Republican Convention at Chicago, after spirited efforts made in favor of Seward, Chase, and Bates, nominated Lincoln for the Presidency, with Hannibal Hamlin for Vice-President, at the same time adopting a vigorous anti-slavery platform.

The Democratic party having been disorganized and presenting two candidates, Douglas and Breckenridge, and the remnant of the "American" party having put forward John Bell of Tennessee, the Republican victory was an easy one, Lincoln being elected, November 6, by a large plurality, comprehending nearly all the Northern States, but none of the Southern. The secession of South Carolina and the Gulf States was the immediate result, followed a few months later by that of the border slave States, and by the outbreak of the great Civil war.

The life of Abraham Lincoln became thenceforth merged in the history of his country. None of the details of the vast conflict which filled the remainder of Lincoln's life can here be given. Narrowly escaping assassination by avoiding Baltimore on his way to the capital, he reached Washington February 23, and was inaugurated President of the United States March 4, 1861.

In his inaugural address he said: "I hold that, in contemplation of universal law and the constitution, the union of these States is perpetual. Perpetuity is implied, is not expressed, in the fundamental laws of all national governments. It is safe to assert that no government proper ever had a provision in its organic law for its own termination. I therefore consider that in view of the constitution and the laws, the Union is unbroken, and to the extent of my ability I shall take care,



LINCOLN IN 1861.

as the constitution enjoins upon me, that the laws of the United States be extended in all the States. In doing this there need be no blood shed or violence, and there shall be none unless it be forced upon the national authority. The power conferred to me will be used to hold, occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imports; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere. In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve, protect and defend it."

He called to his cabinet his principal rivals for the presidential nomination—Seward, Chase, Cameron and Bates; secured the co-operation of the Union Democrats, headed by Douglas; called out seventy-five thousand militia from the several States upon the first tidings of the bombardment of Fort Sumter, April 15; proclaimed a blockade of the Southern ports, April 19; called an extra session of Congress for July 4, from which he asked and obtained four hundred thousand men and \$400,000,000 for the war; placed McClellan at the head of the Federal army on General Scott's resignation, October 31; appointed Edwin M. Stanton Secretary of War, January 14, 1862, and September 22, 1862, issued a proclamation declaring the freedom of all slaves in the States and parts of States then in rebellion from and after January 1, 1863. This was the crowning act of Lincoln's career—the act by which he will be chiefly known through all future time—and it decided the war.

On the 16th of October, 1863, President Lincoln called for three hundred thousand volunteers to replace those whose term of enlistment had expired; made a celebrated and touching, though brief, address at the dedication of the Gettysburg Military Cemetery, November 19, 1863; commissioned Ulysses S. Grant Lieutenant-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of the United States, March 9, 1864; was re-elected President in November of the same year, by a large majority over General McClellan, with Andrew Johnson of Tennessee as Vice-President; delivered a very remarkable address at his second inauguration, March 4, 1865; visited the army before Richmond the same month; entered the capital of the Confederacy the day after its fall, and, upon the surrender of General Robert E. Lee's army April 9, was actively engaged in devising generous plans for the reconstruction of the Union, when, on the evening of Good Friday, April 14, he was shot in his box at Ford's Theater, Washington, by John Wilkes Booth, a fanatical actor, and expired early on the following morning, April 15. Almost simultaneously a murderous attack was made upon William H. Seward, Secretary of State. At noon on the 15th of April, Andrew Johnson assumed the presidency, and active measures were taken which resulted in the death of Booth and the execution of his principal accomplices.

The funeral of President Lincoln was conducted with unexampled solemnity and magnificence. Impressive services were held in Washington, after which the sad procession proceeded over the same route he had traveled four years before from Springfield to Washington. In Philadelphia his body lay in state in Independence Hall, in which he had declared before his first inauguration that "I would sooner be assassinated than to give up the principles of the Declaration of Independence." He was buried at Oak Ridge Cemetery near Springfield, Illinois, on the 4th of May, where a monument emblematic of the emancipation of the slaves and the restoration of the Union marks his resting place.

The leaders and citizens of the expiring Confederacy expressed genuine indignation at the murder of a generous political adversary. Foreign nations took part in mourning the death of a statesman who had proved himself a true representative of American nationality. The freedmen of the South almost worshiped the memory of their deliverer, and the general sentiment of the great nation he had saved awarded him a place in its affections second only to that held by Washington.

The characteristics of Abraham Lincoln have been familiarly known throughout the civilized world. His tall, gaunt though not ungainly figure, homely countenance and his shrewd mother wit, shown in his celebrated conversations overflowing in humorous and pointed anecdote, combined with an accurate, intuitive appreciation of the questions of the time, are recognized as forming the best type of a period of American history in which the strength of the Union was tested and the ability of the people to maintain a free government in this country was fully established. As the years roll by from that stormy period of doubt and battle, the name of Lincoln looms up with increasing luster. His was the brain that shaped the policy of Congress and cabinet, his the unconquerable spirit which fed the flames of patriotism and kept them in a continuous glow of fervent heat. With unbending will and a prescience which could pierce the future, the path of war was made the way to victory—the union restored, a nation saved. His heart was as warm as his hand was strong, and when the great triumph came his was the voice first to proclaim amnesty and peace.























